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COURSES IN HISPANIC AMERICAN HISTORY¹

I. IBERIAN DEVELOPMENT AND EXPANSION

So recent is the development in this field that few of our colleges or universities present any course of more than ten years' standing. We still lack adequate textbooks, or sufficient material in English for supplemental reading. The past five years have witnessed a great increase in the number of courses offered, with a more than corresponding development in the number of students but, in the opinion of the writer, the time is not ripe for the extension of this work into our high schools. Perhaps a few schools of commerce and of business administration might profitably enter this field, especially if they correlate their new courses with their work in geography, economics, or contemporary politics, but work of this sort would better be advertised under other departments than that of History. For the present, the utmost we may hope to do in our higher institutions is to train teachers and men of affairs who will interpret our history from a wider point of view—one that includes Hispanic factors among those of European origin affecting our development—and who will treat our inter-American relationships with more definite and sympathetic knowledge of fundamental economic and racial conditions. Under such expert guidance, we may hope to shift the emphasis in our ordinary textbooks, introducing new topics and changing the interpretation of others, and thus present the history of the Americas in truer perspective, recognizing that it has an Iberian as well as a British background, and that the former can no longer be ignored after a cursory review of early Spanish exploration.

The Iberian Background

The instructor of the average class can not assume that his students already have this background. One can assign to it no hard and fast limits, but these should include the following essential points: (1) the position, extent, and chief physical features of the Iberian Peninsula, its relation to the neighboring continents, and the influence of its physiography in retarding general development and in stimulating regionalism; (2) The Iberian people, their individuality and diversity,

¹ See the syllabus by Dr. Cox, post pp. 419-430.

the methods by which they developed regional attachment, religious fervor, class consciousness—and more slowly—a spirit of aloofness, national in scope and marked by a common literature and a common artistic appreciation, although largely influenced in both respects by foreign models; and (3) Hispanic institutions, such as the Church, the monarchy, the municipality, and the legal system, which like Spanish literature and Spanish art, were profoundly affected by outside influences, but which were in turn transmitted to the American colonies with the indelible Iberian impress.

How these three sets of factors are best to be studied is still an open question. The writer prefers first to present a hurried sketch of the history of the Peninsula, dwelling upon the thorough process of Romanization and the effect of the Moslem irruption and of the Christian reconquest. Then, if time permits, he follows this by a more specific treatment of typical institutions and some consideration of fundamental social and economic factors. A helpful and attractive review of these various phases may be presented in a modern setting by judiciously using recent artistic studies or general books of travel.

The Colonial Period

The discovery and exploration of America appropriately introduces this phase of the study. Here the instructor may assume more knowledge on the part of his students and devote himself to the selection and interpretation of events that are reasonably familiar, with a view to emphasize the Hispanic development in America. The expanded catalogue of explorers and of place names that he must present may require some class drill, but in the case of the average student this will serve to introduce him to unaccustomed phases of Iberian life in an aboriginal American setting. In this task many will for the first time realize that Brazil differs from other parts of Hispanic America. The annals of early exploration will not be complete without including the exploits of those slavetraders, smugglers, and corsairs from northern Europe who led the way to more serious disputes with the Spaniards and the Portuguese for territorial and commercial supremacy in the New World.

In the study of the Spanish colonial system, the writer employs a fourfold division. The first is concerned with the building up of organs of governmental control based on immediate political and economic needs in the homelands and in the colonies. From the viceroyalty

and *audiencia* of this period arise the political divisions that later become independent nationalities. A second part of our colonial study treats of the commercial policy that serves as a model or warning for other nations and frequently lures them into a conflict which finally destroys it; a third points out the measures by which the conquerors established vital relations with the subject population and bestowed upon it such incidental cultural gifts as a common language, a literature of respectable weight and fecundity, a system of instruction, and ecclesiastical hierarchy with organs of control, ritual and artistic monuments still tacitly accepted by the people to whose higher life they have so powerfully contributed. The study of this system will touch upon such topics as the relation of Church and State, the personal dominion of the Crown of Castile, the activities of the religious orders, especially such intensive work as that of the Jesuits in Paraguay, the mining industry with its *mita*, stockraising with its *vaqueros* and *guachos*, and remote ports with their smugglers and complaisant officials. The instructor will also mention schools, universities, printing press, and other cultural agencies, even while paying his respects to the Inquisition. In the fourth division he will compare the early systems of colonial control with conditions under the House of Bourbon, and not fail to point out significant contrasts between the methods of the Spaniard and his leading European rivals. Under such treatment, with due allowance for widely extended jurisdiction, defective means of communication, and the presence of an inert mass of natives, the Spanish system will not suffer in comparison with others, especially in cultural results.

The Wars for Independence

These struggles offer increased opportunities for comparative study and for linking remote areas with the current of world development. The successful revolt of the English colonies, the mighty overturn effected by the French Revolution, and the rise of English industrialism, each in its way awakened a response in the Spanish holdings. The interplay of social and economic factors aroused within the colonies by these disturbing movements was hastened by such external incitements as the Burr and Miranda projects, the unsuccessful attack of the British on Buenos Aires, and the Bonapartist intervention in the homeland. The influence of the Cortes of Cadiz in unifying the spirit of colonial resistance was more than nominal, and even filibustering

expeditions from the Atlantic ports or the southern border of the United States, may truly be interpreted as early manifestations of Pan-Americanism. This spirit, of course, appears more definitely in the events leading up to the Monroe Doctrine.

One will find in the repressive features of the colonial system the moving causes for independence, and in the ruthless warfare of a score of years a reasonable explanation for ensuing turbulence. This ruthlessness was engendered by a system of pitiless repression that frequently classed the ambitious *creole* with the humble *peón* and equally aroused the animosity of both, including in its sweep the growing *mestizo* class. The long-drawn-out struggle for freedom added little political experience or prescience, but saddled the two most numerous groups with the burden of creole domination—a fateful situation for future political disturbances.

II. THE NATIONALISTIC PERIOD

Up to this point the above outline plans to compress the story of two thousand years of Iberian development into a half semester of college work, with a like period reserved for three centuries of colonial control and the Wars of Independence. The remaining half year of the course should be devoted to the development of Hispanic America during the past century. Here the course will have far less unity. Some instructors will attempt to treat the subject wholly through individual countries, and will find difficulty in weaving twenty disconnected strands into a connected fabric. Without attempting to claim superiority for his method or to develop it in detail,² the writer suggests the following outline.

General development.—At this point the instructor may present the physiography and ethnology of the Americas, as a fitting introduction to their national history. Then will follow general topics such as common political issues, social and intellectual factors, etc., illustrated by specific incidents and characters; a survey of common diplomatic relations within Hispanic America and with outside powers, and some mention of economic and social progress of a general type. This survey, which should include, as an important element, the diplomatic and commercial relations of these countries with the United States and

² The writer plans to present a detailed outline of the nationalistic period in a later issue. For the present he is using for book references the excellent syllabus prepared by Dr. W. W. Pierson, Jr., of the University of North Carolina.

Great Britain, might well end with the last years of the nineteenth century. For convenience of treatment, it might well be divided as Professor William R. Shepherd suggests in Chapter XIII. of his *Latin America*.

The development of selected countries.—The above treatment will dispose of a few of the minor countries. The history of the more important ones during the nineteenth century will call for further study. In this study, the writer prefers to treat them in geographical groups, without suggesting any invidious classifications based on apparent progress or the lack of it. Of course, the basis for such a grouping exists, and the racial or economic facts that justify it should be brought out in each case, but it is not necessary to do so in a formal outline or in chapter headings. In each country, the physiography, population, and characteristic products should receive adequate consideration, as well as its specific diplomatic and commercial connections; and its *literati* should be neglected as little as its statesmen. The student should be led to see how the given country emerged from its colonial status and passed through the vicissitudes of dictatorial control to relative stability, granted that its development has reached the latter happy point. In this portion of the course, the emphasis should be placed upon events that differentiate each country from its fellows.

The present era.—The last two decades bring a series of problems of general interest, the consideration of which may fittingly close the course. Industrial and commercial advancement is marked in the progress of a few countries and in general meetings for expressing common experiences. Social progress shows itself in scientific and missionary gatherings, whose impelling forces are drawn from without and within the countries affected. Hispanic America becomes Pan America in more fields than the political, and the latter term takes on a new meaning. This condition leads naturally to a discussion of the Monroe Doctrine in this new era, of the attitude taken by Hispanic America toward the World War, and of the coming importance of various countries in the days of peace before us. The history of Hispanic America thus definitely merges into World History, in which its representatives, as well as our own, must play an important part.

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